

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An information processing apparatus
comprising:

a system bus;

5 a CPU connected to said system bus;

a memory connected to said system bus;

a data transmission/reception unit transmitting
and receiving data to and from a network;

10 an encoding/decoding unit encoding and decoding
data;

an external input/output interface controller
controlling an input/output interface with an external
unit; and

15 an input/output switching unit selectively forming
a data path among said data transmission/reception unit,
said encoding/decoding unit and said external
input/output interface controller.

2. The apparatus according to claim 1, further
comprising:

20 a control unit controlling said input/output
switching unit to selectively form the data path
connecting said data transmission/reception unit to
said encoding/decoding unit and the data path
connecting said data transmission/reception unit to
25 said external input/output interface controller in
accordance with a communication system.

3. The apparatus according to claim 2, wherein

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said control unit is also capable of controlling said input/output switching unit to form the data path connecting said external input/output interface controller to said encoding/decoding unit.

5 4. The apparatus according to claim 2, wherein said control unit controls said input/output switching unit in accordance with an input operation of a user.

10 5. The apparatus according to claim 2, wherein said control unit is implemented by said external input/output interface controller.

6. An information processing apparatus comprising:

15 a system bus;
 a CPU connected to said system bus;
 a memory connected to said system bus;
 a data transmission/reception unit transmitting and receiving data to and from a network;
 an encoding/decoding unit encoding and decoding data;
20 an external input/output interface controller controlling an input/output interface with an external unit; and
 an input/output switching unit selectively forming a data path among said external input/output interface controller, said system bus, said data
25 transmission/reception unit and said encoding/decoding unit.

7. The apparatus according to claim 6, further comprising:

a control unit controlling said input/output switching unit to selectively form the data path connecting said external input/output interface controller to said system bus and the data path connecting said external input/output interface controller to said data transmission/reception unit in accordance with a communication system.

8. The apparatus according to claim 7, wherein said control unit is also capable of controlling said input/output switching unit so as to form the data path connecting said external input/output interface controller to said encoding/decoding unit.

9. An information processing apparatus comprising:

a system bus;
a CPU connected to said system bus;
a memory connected to said system bus;

a data transmission/reception unit transmitting and receiving data to and from a network;

a first external input/output interface controller controlling a first external input/output interface with an external unit;

a second external input/output interface controller controlling a second external input/output interface with the external unit; and

an input/output switching unit selectively forming
a data path among said first external input/output
interface, said second external input/output interface,
said system bus and said data transmission/reception
5 unit.

10. The apparatus according to claim 9, further
comprising:

a control unit controlling said input/output
switching unit to simultaneously form the data path
10 connecting said first external input/output interface
to the system bus and the data path connecting said
second external input/output interface to said data
transmission/reception unit.

11. An information processing apparatus
15 comprising:

a system bus;
a CPU connected to said system bus;
a memory connected to said system bus;
a data transmission/reception unit transmitting
20 and receiving data to and from a network;
a voice encoding/decoding unit encoding and
decoding voice data;
an image encoding/decoding unit encoding and
decoding image data;
25 a voice/image multiplexing/demultiplexing unit
conducting voice and image multiplexing and
demultiplexing to the voice data and the image data;

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an external input/output interface controller
controlling an input/output interface with an external
unit; and

an input/output switching unit selectively forming
5 a data path among said data transmission/reception
unit, said voice encoding/decoding unit, said image
encoding/decoding unit, said voice/image multiplexing/
demultiplexing unit and said external input/output
interface controller.

10 12. The apparatus according to claim 11, further
comprising:

a control unit controlling said input/output
switching unit to simultaneously form the data path
connecting said data transmission/reception unit to a
15 voice and image multiplexing data line of said
voice/image multiplexing/demultiplexing unit, the data
path connecting a voice data line of said voice/image
multiplexing/demultiplexing unit to said voice
encoding/decoding unit, and the data path connecting an
20 image data line of said voice/image multiplexing/
demultiplexing unit to said image encoding/decoding
unit.

13. The apparatus according to claim 12, wherein
said control unit is capable of controlling said
25 input/output switching unit to sever the data path
connecting the voice data line of said voice/image
multiplexing/demultiplexing unit to said voice

encoding/decoding unit and to form the data path connecting the voice data line of said voice/image multiplexing/demultiplexing unit to said external input/output interface controller.

5 14. The apparatus according to claim 12, wherein said control unit is capable of controlling said input/output switching unit to sever the data path connecting the image data line of said voice/image multiplexing/demultiplexing unit to said image
10 encoding/decoding unit and to form the data path connecting the image data line of said voice/image multiplexing/demultiplexing unit to said external input/output interface controller.

15 15. An information processing apparatus comprising:

an input/output unit inputting and outputting information;

20 a first communication unit communicating the information inputted and outputted to and from said input/output unit with an external unit;

a connection unit connecting an expansion device including a second communication unit different from said first communication unit; and

25 a switching unit switching communication through said first communication unit to communication through said first communication unit and said second communication unit in accordance with connection of

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said expansion device to said connection unit.

16. An information processing apparatus comprising:

5 an input/output unit inputting and outputting information;

a first communication unit communicating the information inputted and outputted to and from said input/output unit with an external unit;

10 a connection unit connecting an expansion device including a second communication unit different from said first communication unit; and

15 a switching unit switching communication through said first communication unit to communication through said second communication unit in accordance with connection of said expansion device to said connection unit.

17. An information processing apparatus comprising:

20 an input/output unit inputting and outputting information;

a first communication unit communicating the information inputted and outputted to and from said input/output unit with an external unit;

25 a connection unit selectively connecting a first expansion device including a second communication unit different from said first communication unit, and a second expansion device including a memory storing the

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information; and

a setting unit setting a state of transferring the information without going through said first communication unit if said second expansion device is connected to said connection unit, and setting a state of communication through said first communication unit and said second communication unit if said first expansion device is connected to said connection unit.

18. The apparatus according to claim 17, wherein the second expansion device including a third communication unit different from said second communication unit is connectable to said connection unit; and

said setting unit sets a state of communication through said third communication state without going through said first communication unit if said second expansion device is connected to said connection unit.

19. The apparatus according to claim 17, further comprising:

another connection unit different in interface standard from said connection unit.

20. An information processing apparatus comprising:

an input/output unit inputting and outputting information;

a first communication unit communicating the information inputted and outputted to and from said

input/output unit with an external unit;

a connection unit selectively connecting a first expansion device including a second communication unit different from said first communication unit, and a
5 second expansion device including a memory storing the information; and

a setting unit setting a state of communication through said second communication unit if said first expansion device is connected to said connection unit,
10 and setting a state of communication through said first communication unit if said second expansion device is connected to said connection unit.

21. An information processing apparatus comprising:

15 an input/output unit inputting and outputting information;

a first communication unit communicating voice and image information inputted and outputted to and from said input/output unit with an external unit;

20 a connection unit connecting an expansion device including a second communication unit different from said first communication unit; and

a setting unit making a setting for communicating one of said voice information and said image
25 information through said second communication unit in accordance with connection of said expansion device to said connection unit.

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22. A communication function expansion method applied to an information processing apparatus including an input/output unit inputting and outputting information, and a first communication unit
5 communicating the information inputted and outputted to and from the input/output unit with an external unit, said method comprising:

allowing an expansion device including a second communication unit different from said first
10 communication unit to be connected to said information processing apparatus; and

switching communication through said first communication unit to communication through said first communication unit and said second communication unit
15 in accordance with connection of said expansion device to said information processing apparatus.

23. A communication function expansion method applied to an information processing apparatus including an input/output unit inputting and outputting
20 information, and a first communication unit communicating the information inputted and outputted to and from the input/output unit with an external unit, said method comprising:

allowing an expansion device including a second
25 communication unit different from said first communication unit to be connected to said information processing apparatus; and

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switching communication through said first communication unit to communication through said second communication unit in accordance with connection of said expansion device to said information processing apparatus.

24. A communication function expansion method applied to an information processing apparatus including an input/output unit inputting and outputting information, and a first communication unit communicating the information inputted and outputted to and from the input/output unit with an external unit, said method comprising:

allowing a first expansion device including a second communication unit different from said first communication unit and a second expansion device including a memory storing the information to be selectively connected to said information processing apparatus; and

setting a state of transferring the information without going through said first communication unit if said second expansion device is connected to said information processing apparatus, and setting a state of communication through said first communication unit and said second communication unit if said first expansion device is connected to said information processing apparatus.

25. A communication function expansion method

applied to an information processing apparatus
including an input/output unit inputting and outputting
information, and a first communication unit communi-
cating the information inputted and outputted to and
5 from the input/output unit with an external unit, said
method comprising:

allowing a first expansion device including a
second communication unit different from said first
communication unit and a second expansion device
10 including a memory storing the information to be
selectively connected to said information processing
apparatus; and

setting a state of communication through said
second communication through said second communication
15 unit if said first expansion device is connected to
said information processing apparatus, and setting a
state of communication through said first communication
unit if said second expansion device is connected to
said information processing apparatus.

20 26. A communication function expansion method
applied to an information processing apparatus
including an input/output unit inputting and outputting
information, and a first communication unit communi-
cating voice information and image information inputted
25 and outputted to and from the input/output unit with an
external unit, said method comprising:

allowing an expansion device including a second

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communication unit different from said first
communication unit to be connected to said information
processing apparatus; and

5 making a setting for communicating one of said
voice information and said image information through
second communication unit in accordance with connection
of said expansion device to said information processing
apparatus.

10 27. An information processing apparatus
comprising:

20 a system bus;
a CPU connected to said system bus;
a memory connected to said system bus;
a data transmission unit transmitting data to a
15 network;
a data reception unit receiving data from the
network;
a decoding unit decoding the data received by said
data reception unit;
20 an encoding unit encoding data to be transmitted
by said data transmission unit;
an external input/output interface controller
controlling an input/output interface with an external
unit; and
25 an input/output switching unit selectively forming
a data path among said data reception unit, said data
transmission unit, said decoding unit, said encoding

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